

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 17, 2009

Gene L. Dodaro
Interim Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We are writing to request that the General Accounting Office (GAO) undertake a review of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) lease acquisition process for the NOAA Marine Operations Center - Pacific (MOC-P).

In November 2008, NOAA initiated a Solicitation for Offers (SFO) for the lease and acquisition of its MOC-P, with the goal of acquiring the "best value" property for NOAA to house its MOC-P. The competitive process involved a multi-pronged approach towards determining the best location for the MOC-P. However, serious concerns have been expressed as to the basis for the final lease award decision in part because it appears the SFO evaluation criteria changed.

The sites considered for final evaluation were:

- 1801 Fairview Ave East, Inc., Lake union, Seattle, WA (existing MOC-P site)
- Port of Port Angeles, Port Angeles, WA (Terminal 3)
- Port of Bellingham, Bellingham, WA (Bellingham Shipping Terminal); and
- Port of Newport, Newport, OR (Dock 2).

In light of these concerns, we request a GAO examination of the NOAA lease acquisition process for the NOAA MOC-P. We would like GAO to investigate whether this process is in conformance with past and general practice, and in conformance with federal statute, including:

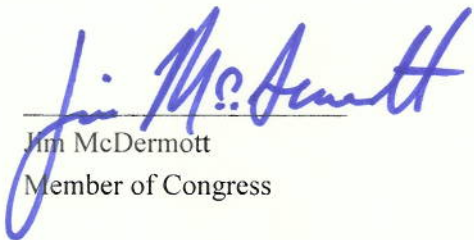
1. The decision to exclude downstream operational costs likely to be incurred by NOAA over the term of the lease.
2. The effects on the competitiveness of each of the final bids with respect to NOAA's April amendments to the SFO criteria.
3. Whether the final lease acquisition decision for Newport, OR differed from the recommendation submitted by the Source Evaluation Board.
4. The basis for the criteria used to determine the weight of the cost benefit for the lease price, versus the technical criteria.
5. If the cost of the lease played a final role in the decision that was inconsistent with the Solicitation for Offers.

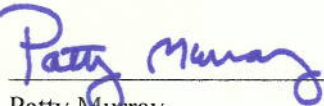
6. The assessment and weight given to the projected attrition of employees who will not or cannot move locations.

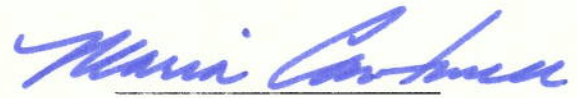
We seek to ensure that the lease awarded for the MOC-P ultimately results in the best value option for NOAA and the American taxpayers. If you would like to discuss this request, please contact Livia Shmavonian at (202) 225-3106.


Thank you for your assistance in this matter.


Sincerely,



Jim McDermott
Member of Congress


Patty Murray
United States Senator


Maria Cantwell
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Oceans,
Atmosphere, Fisheries, and
Coast Guard
United States Senate


Jay Inslee
Member of Congress


Adam Smith
Member of Congress


Brian Baird
Member of Congress


Dave Reichert
Member of Congress